

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING

Schoodic Education and Research Center

Tuesday, September 02, 2014 1:00 P.M.

Present:

Steve Katona, Chair
Jackie Johnston, Vice Chair
Paul Richardson, Member
Katherine Hiedinger, Member
Bruce Wiersma, Member
Ben (Lee) Worcester, Member
Carolyn Gothard, Member
Fred Ehrlenbach, Member
Sheridan Steele, Superintendent, ANP
David Manski, Acting Deputy Superintendent, ANP
John Kelly, Park Planner, ANP
Kevin Langley, Chief of Administration, ANP
Keith Johnston, Chief, Division of Maintenance, ANP
Beck Cole-Will, Chief of Resource Mgmt., ANP
Abe Miller-Rushing, Science Coordinator, ANP
Ryan McKelvey, Revenue & Fee Business Mgr., ANP
Mark Berry, President & CEO, Schoodic Institute
Ed Samek, Friends of Acadia
Stephanie Clement, Friends of Acadia

The Commission Chair called the meeting to order at the Schoodic Education and Research Center at 1:00 p.m. and made opening remarks. Thank you to the park service for arrangements made for boat transport today; and to everyone who attended a tour of the Rockefeller building. Also, we would like to thank Dave Manski for his help in organizing today's meeting in his capacity as Acting Deputy Superintendent at Acadia National Park.

The minutes for the February 3rd, 2014, meeting were accepted, seconded and unanimously approved. Thank you to Betsy Mitchell for her help with the meetings. Betsy has finished her service with the park service.

The minutes for the June 2nd, 2014, meeting were accepted, seconded and unanimously approved. Thank you to June Devisfruto and Dave Manski in the transcription of the June 2nd meeting minutes.

Vice Chair Jackie Johnson thanked Michelle Bierman for facilitating the 1st Annual Reunion of the Naval Security Group Activity - Winter Harbor, Civilians and Military. It was well received and attended.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Award Presentation - Presented by Sheridan Steele (Superintendent)

Sheridan presented the Employee of the Year Award to Kate Petrie, who has been instrumental in developing education programs at Acadia and the Schoodic Education Adventure, which serves up to eight hundred students.

Kate introduced her crew for the 2014 season, made up of a host of volunteers, interns, and seasonal rangers.

Staff Updates - Presented by David Manski (Acting Deputy Superintendent)

New Hires

Rebecca Cole-Will – Chief of Resource Management (succeeding David Manski)
Kathleen Flanders – Secretary to the Superintendent (succeeding Pauline Blanchard)

Vacancy Updates

Law Enforcement Department:

2 vacancies coming up in the fall - Ed Prontbriand and Richard Rechholtz (retirees)

Administrative Division:

Administrative Support Assistant (to replace Betsy Mitchell position) – we are presently working on filling the position

Fee Program:

Working on filling a permanent, less than full-time, position to work at Thompson Island, Village Green and Visitor’s Center

Management Division:

Deputy Superintendent’s position – we are still recruiting for the position.

Expiring Terms of Commission Members - Presented by David Manski

Members of the Commission are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior after being recommended by different jurisdictions of communities and organization entities that the National park Service works with here at Acadia. Three members are recommended by the State of Maine; four from the towns of Mt. Desert Island; three from mainland communities in Hancock County; three from the Islands surrounding the park; and three from the Public at Large. Basically, everyone’s term expires at the end of this month, with the exception of the state appointees. The one vacancy from the State of Maine is Mrs. Leach, who passed away earlier this year.

The process is to contact each jurisdiction and the members to see if they would like to continue to serve on the commission; and then contact the jurisdictions requesting their recommendations or request renewal of the membership on the commission. We have started the process. We are waiting for two recommendations from the State of Maine and waiting to hear from the

Cranberry Isles and Frenchboro. It is doubtful there will be a member from Frenchboro. There is a new added process for a Federal Register Notice to be published to alert the public of the three available seats on the Commission for the Public at Large. It was submitted up to two months ago but still has not been published. Once published, there will be an additional thirty day requirement for the public to respond. Then all the names will be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior in Washington for a decision.

Schoodic Woods - Presented by Sheridan Steele

Schoodic Woods refers to 3200 acres, located north & south of Highway 186, known as the Schoodic District of Acadia. This land purchased by Lyme Timber, a Conservation Development Organization of New Hampshire. They have been working on plans as well as construction, for the property south of 186. After purchase, they donated a conservation easement on most of the south-half to Acadia National Park, which was endorsed by the Commission one year ago. That easement contained a “forever wild” section and a development envelope of 130 acres with specifications on what could be developed on that land. Now under construction is a 96 site campground with RV, tent, and walk-in campsites; a day-use parking lot for 100 vehicles; campground office and information center; a maintenance building; all of the restrooms needed for the campground and the day-use area; parking lot; a seven-mile bike path and four miles of hiking trails connecting to existing trails. The construction was started the beginning of this year and they project it to be done June, 2015. We have entered into an agreement with the owners to operate the facilities as if they were part of Acadia National Park. We have authority to do that because of the conservation easement. The easement provided some affirmative rights to the park to actually operate those facilities on that land. The owners have agreed to an endowment to help with operating shortfalls and some start-up costs. We will get income from the campground and we have been through the numbers to determine operating costs and expected income for the campground facilities and, hopefully, they will make up the shortfall.

There will be two major effects of this project. One, it will be a wonderful bike experience. Now biking is good until you get out of the park and then you are in two-way traffic. The extended bike path will in future allow one to complete the loop without having to get on the roads or on the Island Explorer bus with the bike. The other effect will be facilitating extended visits, going from a one day visit to three, four or five day visits while staying in the campground and seeking out services within the community (groceries, showers, laundry, supplies, restaurants, etc.). This will be an economic engine for the Schoodic area. The campground will be open and fully operational when we put it on the national park registration system. Bicyclists can take advantage of the ferry service to Bar Harbor or from MDI for the day to make that loop. The bus service and the ferry schedule will be of importance and we want to improve coverage. Our goal is to get people to leave vehicles on site and make use of other forms of transportation (ferry, boat, walking, etc.). We are looking to reduce the speed limit from campground onto the causeway.

RV sites will have electric hookups and water; a dump station will be available. All tent sites will have electric. There will be water-based toilets. The facilities will be staffed by National Park employees, including law enforcement and emergency medical.

When the conservation easement was transferred to the park, Maine Coast Heritage Trust established a community payments-in-lieu of taxes fund, an endowment which will provide the same amount of money the communities are getting from the land now once it goes out of public ownership or it continues under easement. It is at a low rate but it will, at the least, maintain the same level.

A public meeting was held in Winter Harbor regarding Schoodic Woods. There was a lot of interest in the potential for economic activity and positive support for the project.

Upcoming Construction - Presented by Keith Johnston (Chief of Maintenance)

Construction projects have been completed at the bus stops at Thunder Hole, Sand Beach, Bubble Pond, Bubble Rock, the North Ridge Trail Head and Acadia Mountain. We have completed work at the Jordon Pond boat ramp.

Upcoming work on Motor Road bridges includes the Paradise Hill Bridge, the Route 233 Bridge, and the Route 3 Bridge. Some work scheduled for the spring includes Fish House Bridge, Kebo Brook Bridge, and the Sieur de Monts Bridge.

We did not receive any bids on the paving project at the Visitor's Center. We were planning on paving at St. Croix, but the three applicants for the job failed to do successful Federal bids. Thompson Island picnic area is undergoing an overhaul that will proceed into the fall.

We are currently under design contracts for three major sewerage systems; the Black Woods Campground, the Seawall Campground, and Sieur de Monts. The Isle au Haut pier is under design for replacement this year.

Clean Cities Grant - Presented by Keith Johnston

There will be another Clean Cities Grant. We will be procuring a couple of electric vehicles for the park. Also, we are looking at installing electric charging stations at the Park Headquarters, another one at Schoodic Institute, and several more for use on campus.

Transportation Plan – Presented by Keith Johnston

We are working with the Regional Office on developing a long-range transportation plan for ANP that will look at our parking challenges and other transportation needs. This summer we installed new monitoring stations at the Park Loop Road, parking areas, and have done manual counts that separate bike, bus and car traffic. We hope to use that data to move forward. Hopefully, we can award this work to a Transportation Study Group to work with us through June to address the needs at the national park.

Foundation Plan – Presented by John Kelly (Park Planner)

The National Park Service has a lot to address when dealing with protecting resources and values while trying to provide high quality experience to visitors. At Acadia, the General Management Planning focuses on the two key aspects of what we do; protect and provide. When we look at Acadia, we see a 50 mile stretch of 85-90 Islands; 36,000 acres of fee land; and almost 14,000 acres of conservation easement, with the addition of what Sheridan described, spread out in 10

different towns. In 1992, we had a General Management Plan, which was required by the National Parks & Recreation Act. It was meant to be a comprehensive plan, not just for the park as a whole but for individual units, i.e. Isle au Haut, Schoodic, and beyond. Because of the comprehensiveness of the process, it is subject to NEPA. In that case, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) needs to be completed. The NPS at Acadia has not done a new General Management Plan since 1992. We did a General Management Plan Amendment for Schoodic to address the needs to transform it into Schoodic Educational Research Center. The process is expensive and time-consuming.

The Park Service has started the process for all national parks to create a Foundation Document. A Foundation Document contains all the necessary information a park would need to make decisions and address future planning issues gathered in a portfolio without actually making those decisions. It supplies information, identifies, and determines future efforts while protecting our resources. It does not require NEPA because we are not taking any action to change or affect the resources.

The Foundation Document has two main components. The first contains a physical description, purpose, significance and identification of resources of the park as well as a section describing how we share Acadia with the public and our interpretive themes. The second part is a section of things that could change such as special mandates, administrative commitments, or anything we deal with that is not directly part of our mission, i.e., agreements and easements. We also want a better sense of the resources, trends, conditions, climate change, threats and issues to analyze. It is an implementation plan, which is more specific than a transportation plan. We are on schedule to have one for fiscal year 2015. There will be a public input component. Once we have completed the Foundation Document, it will be used as a base for all our future plans.

Night Sky Festival – Presented by John Kelly

Acadia Night Sky Festival is in its sixth year. Last year we had 6,000 participants. It is scheduled for September 25th through September 29th with thirty programs identified and designed for various ages. In the chance we do not have a clear sky, we have several indoor programs. We have music, arts, photography, and some lectures on the night sky. Last year there were a thousand people on top of Cadillac for the Cadillac Star Party. It was a perfect two hour star gazing program. We are looking forward to another clear weekend in September.

Concessions Operations – Presented by Kevin Langley (Chief of Administration)

Acadia has four concessions – Carriages of Acadia, Oli's Trolley National Park Tours, and Dawnland, which takes care of the restaurants and gift shops. This season has been going well and we are doing our evaluations. Things are operating relatively smoothly. At Jordon Pond House, Dawnland has been adhering to contract and communications have been good. There have been some personnel changes recently. Two key people, the general manager and dining room manager, resigned. Dawnland has filled the positions and they are getting brought up-to-date on agreements and procedures. We have received a lot of comments from visitors this year. We have been listening to, and answering, these concerns and passing them along to Dawnland and they have been addressing them. Comments or feedback should be directed to Dawnland or to the park with attention to the Superintendent's office.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business to address at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Commission Chair Katona shared a resolution of appreciation to recognize Alice Long for her service on the Advisory Commission. The resolution was adopted unanimously. It read:

The Acadia National Park Advisory Commission thanks Alice Long for 14 years of outstanding service. Alice's insights, observations and comments were always on target and important to the Commission's work. Her wry sense of humor made our meetings more enjoyable on numerous occasions. Alice also expressed her deep dedication to the Park and its visitors as a hiker of all the trails and tour guide for those arriving by cruise ship or bus. Since her appointment by the Secretary of the Interior as a Public Member at Large, the Commission and Acadia National Park have benefitted beyond measure from her energetic commitment. We celebrate Alice's service and citizenship, and thank her for all her contributions to the Park's current and future success.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Land Conservation

Nothing to report at this time.

Park Use

Park Entrance Fee Program – Ryan McKelvey

Introduced Ryan McKelvey, Fee Manager, to address upcoming changes to the fee program implemented this season. Fee monies are meant to be spent on visitor service projects. Eighty percent of the monies collected remains for Acadia. The remaining 20 percent goes to parks that do not collect fees. After studies, it was determined about sixty-eight percent of park visitors were paying the park entrance fee. We are looking at short-term ways to increase the compliance and park revenue by changing sales location, changing our type of annual pass, and educating the public, along with requiring cars to display their park entrance pass. We have had 1100 percent increase in voucher sales from third party locations. Changing the park pass will bring the pass into National Park Pass national standards and, rather than a sticker, visitors will receive a card, which works for the vehicle they are driving, instead of a sticker for each owned vehicle. This way they will only bring one vehicle each time they visit the park.

Compared to last year, we are at a twenty percent increase on Acadia Annual Park Pass sales. New signs have been created to notify visitors they are recreating at Acadia National Park. Notices will be going on vehicles on which an entrance pass is not displayed, stating why it is important to display one and locations to purchase one. This will be a 3 tiered phase, followed by a written warning and, lastly, a citation. One year to date, we are at 2.2 million in revenue. This is a twenty percent increase in revenue in comparison to last year. Other factors include economy, weather, marketing, and so forth. We are not seeing a twenty percent increase in visitation.

The purpose of the Park Pass is to be focused on vehicles within the park. Visitors walking or biking are harder to monitor, especially if the pass is left with the vehicle. The Park Pass is a vehicle pass and covers all passengers in the vehicle. The new Acadia Annual Park Pass will be fully implemented in January, 2015.

Visitation and Island Explorer Numbers – David Manski

Through July, 2014, we are about 4.8 percent above July, 2013, on visitation. Our number of 1,289,758 recreational visits does not include the Island Explorer passengers who may be visiting the park. The estimated numbers are obtained through road counters and do not include an estimated count of people on the buses that are actually coming into the park. We are going to try to integrate these numbers together. Through mid-August, 2014, on the Island Explorer, there were 329,445 riders, including the bicycle express. That represents fifteen percent increase in ridership from 2013 to 2014. In 2013, there was a nine percent increase over 2012.

To date, the Island Explorer carried 9,000 or more passengers in one day on three separate occasions. In previous times, the high was only 8400. In mid to late August, it had over 8,000 passengers on one day. It has never transported that many passengers on any given day that late in August. Coach bus passenger counts are down, which we are led to believe is due to smaller cruise ships with fewer passengers.

NPS Drone Policy – David Manski

There have been a few instances of Drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), and we are concerned on the resource impacts, as well as potential safety issues. This summer a UAV actually crashed into a geyser in Yellowstone and the geology and ecology impacts on that geyser are unknown to us. In June, the Park Service Director put out a moratorium allowing public use of flying drones inside, or above, the park until the National Park Service could develop regulations to manage and protect visitor experiences and park resources. We have updated our regulations in the park as follows,

“Launching, landing or operating an unmanned aircraft from, or on, lands or waters administered by the National Park Service within the boundaries of Acadia National Park is prohibited except as approved in writing by the Superintendent.”

We have to go through a lengthy approval process in Washington, D.C. for our administrative needs. We have not used drones but we did have a demonstration by researchers at the University of Maine. We have a permit request from some researchers who want to use it in collaboration with the park. For instance, one of the applications we feel may be useful is for sensing sensitive seabirds nesting on some of the offshore islands. Normally, the best way is to walk on the island, which causes tremendous disturbance to the birds. Counting from a boat on the water is not necessarily effective. We feel it would be more productive to do it from a drone. I think we are going to seek approval for that request to Washington and then do some research on what kind of effects or disturbance a drone might have on the birds. There are three instances where drones were used in the park this summer and we did not learn of it until after the fact. We are trying to be more diligent of that. If we should request the use of a drone, we will determine appropriate use and document the cost, effectiveness and impact.

Historic

Motor Road Vista Management – Rebecca Cole-Will

We once had panoramic vistas along the Park Loop Road (Motor Road) and they have largely grown in over the years. The issues and questions are how to document this. The Motor Road is a historic property. We want to ensure we cut the vistas back in such a way that we maintain the historic authenticity so when folks pull onto a vista pull-out, they can see what they came to see. We are starting the work now and we are planning to cut these back in a careful and thoughtful way. A lot of the work will be done by our maintenance crew under Keith Johnston; working with vegetative management specialists and landscape architects. We are getting information out to stakeholders and the public. The University of Maine forestry students have worked on the Carriage Roads vistas in the past but that program is no longer an option. It has been several years since we have done work on the Motor Road.

Science and Education

Update on Schoodic Institute and NPS Programs at the Schoodic Education and Research Center – Mark Berry

David Manski introduced Mark Berry, President and CEO of the Schoodic Institute.

I feel we are extremely fortunate to be in this partnership. Last year, we went through a name change to Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park. We are working on communications and we have more good work to do, more exciting programs underway, and more potential than the public perception reflects. We have work to do to get our story out, build support, and build the capacity of our organization, both financially and in terms of our staff, so we may be a stronger partner to the park and deliver more value through that relationship. We have a new website, www.schoodicinstitute.org where you will find an events listing and some results of the partnership with the park.

Supporting the park's research needs is our highest priority in our education programs. We look for opportunities for education and research to be entwined, so our participants, whether middle school students, senior citizens or anywhere in between, have the opportunity to participate in research that will be meaningful to the park's resource managers and to the broader region. And for participants to have a richer education experience as a result and to show them what they are doing is real and meaningful. Abe Miller-Rushing has said many times that the highest priority is to understand and learn to respond to rapid environmental change. That theme runs through a lot of what we do, as does the theme of Citizens and Science.

The Student Education Adventure draws Maine students from all over the state, as well as a few schools in the northeast, where they learn about the park, science and connecting to nature. The Acadia Learning Program is a program that takes park related science out to schools and communities mostly throughout Maine. Teachers come to Schoodic for one week for staff workshops in professional development in the summer. We also have advanced placement teacher institutes to learn advanced chemistry, physics, biology, statistics, calculus, and history. Also, we have the Physical Sciences Partnership with the University of Maine, which brings teachers to the campus for a week and they spend the remainder of the year collaborating with our staff to bring better methods to include Physical Science education to rural schools in Maine. Lastly, we have two programs that connect with international audiences and landscape

conservation. The Acadian Program draws students and young conservation professionals from different countries and an international, short course, led by the National Park Service, brought different conservation professionals from around the world to learn from the history and examples of conservation around Maine and the northeast. We also have a lot of public programs.

On August 15th, a public event celebrating our partnership with the National Park Service was held at Rockefeller Hall. The keynote speaker was Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell. Also speaking was Jon Jarvis, Director, National Park Service; David Rockefeller, Jr; Sheridan Steele; Alan Goldstein, Board Chairman; and Neil Muholland, President of the National Park Foundation. It was well received.

On August 24th, we took two hundred-fifty people on a Whale Watch, thanks to the Bar Harbor Whale Watch Company. It was a wonderful event and well appreciated.

(A short video on The Introduction to Schoodic Institute was shown).

Climate Change Update – Abe Miller-Rushing

There are sixty-five research programs going on throughout the park, some of which are funded wholly, or in part, by the National Park Service. *(A list of research programs was distributed).* Several of those programs are researching Climate Change and there are some new reports forthcoming. Over the past one hundred years, temperatures have warmed by 1.6 degrees, precipitation has increased by eight inches, and ice-out is almost one week earlier. There is a longer growing season by almost sixty days from first frost to last frost. The most extreme temperatures and precipitation one hundred years ago is our norm today.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

A member of the Public - On August 15th, at the Schoodic Institutes public event, I could not have been prouder. The park representatives were outstanding. Sheridan was the model spokesman for Acadia National Park, as well as the National Park Service. The staff at Schoodic Institute handled everything. It was a huge group and everyone was fed. The park people from Washington, DC were mightily impressed with this campus. For a small staff and upstart with a public-private partnership with the park service, everyone was blown away by the speeches and the commitment made to the success of this group.

Stephanie Clement, Friends of Acadia – Thank you to the NPS employees who helped with our seasonal interns this summer. Everyone did a fantastic job. Also, we have a new pilot program called the Cadillac Summit Stewards Program and we are keeping some of our seasonals on through fall. It is being funded, thanks to our donors who contributed around \$120,000 and our benefit auction, to direct toward the summit of Cadillac, with improvement of the visitor experience, restoration of vegetation and transportation solutions. We are focusing first on improving the visitor experience and trying to protect the alpine vegetation. The Cadillac Summit Stewards Program is a hybrid of the Ridgerunner program, people out talking to visitors about Leave No Trace, and they are receiving enhanced interpretation skills so they will be able to talk to visitors about everything from Alpine vegetation to geology and so on. It is a great new program.

Stephanie Clement introduced Ed Samek, Chair, Friends of Acadia Board.

Ed Samek – Our partnership with Acadia National Park is why Friends of Acadia exists. We feel that our partnership is strong. We are pleased that sixty-eight percent of visitors are paying entrance fees. Could the post office be a distribution point? Ed shared with the group the Friends of Acadia's recently completed strategic planning process, its goal of tightened focus on projects which make a significant difference, and the importance of private philanthropy matched with public funding to ensure a strong future for Acadia.

Sheridan Steele – Being a part of government, we have to adhere to national policies. One of those established by the Office of Personnel Management has to do with hiring, particularly the hiring of youth. The hiring of youth has been eliminated. The only way we have been hiring youth now is through the Friends of Acadia. They have been hiring the youth. They have hired a minimum of 30 to 40 youths to work at Acadia. All of these programs are being run through Friends of Acadia. The advantage of these partnerships is they can help us do the things we otherwise could not do. Partnerships are extremely important to Acadia, particularly if you want to engage youth to work outdoors like we do.

Closing Comments

The Commission Chair made closing comments and thanked the members of the park service who participated today and do so much to help the Commission, the members of the Commission for their dedication in attending three meetings a year, and to the public. He also thanked SERC and the Schoodic Institute for hosting today's meeting.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 P.M.

NEXT COMMISSION MEETING:

Please remember to send any suggestions for agenda items to Steve Katona.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 2, 2015, 1:00 P.M., at the Acadia National Park Headquarters, McFarland Hill, Bar Harbor, Maine, as published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The Monday, June 1st, 2015, 1:00 P.M. meeting will also be held at Acadia National Park Headquarters, McFarland Hill, Bar Harbor, Maine.

Minutes Transcribed and Respectfully Submitted by Kathy Flanders